

a deer—like a deer—and the blood is going to on American hands. And the whole world is going to take notice.

There is right and wrong in this world. There is politics. There is a time for it. But there is a time to do the right thing, and the right thing is to help save these human lives who fought for America and their families and their children.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arkansas.

#### MASK MANDATES

Mr. COTTON. There is a disturbing trend in the not-so-friendly skies these days—a big spike in confrontations, often violent, on American airplanes. It is all the more disturbing because it is totally unnecessary. In most cases, these disputes go back to one of the Biden administration's dumbest policies—the mask mandate at airports and on airplanes.

When the Wuhan coronavirus broke out in our country last year, confusion and uncertainty reigned, but within a couple of months, some commonsense standards had emerged: Protect the elderly and the frail. Outdoor activities are safer than indoor ones. Keep your distance. Wear a mask when you can't for prolonged periods inside. Be civil and kind to each other.

Thanks to Operation Warp Speed, these standards are largely a thing of the past. Americans are tired of it, and they want their freedoms back, and they are right. But too many Democratic politicians and know-it-all bureaucrats don't want to give up their newfound powers.

No single action captures this power grab by government busybodies better than the TSA's decision to extend its zero-tolerance mask mandates for planes, trains, and buses until September, through the summer travel season. This mandate applies to the vaccinated and the unvaccinated alike, as well as kids over the age of 2.

Passengers without a mask or accompanied by children without a mask can lose their seats and be banned from airlines and subject to a \$1,500 fine. This draconian and punitive policy has no basis in science. After all, airports typically have larger spaces and higher ceilings than, say, a grocery store and pharmacy. Planes have some of the most advanced air filtration systems available in the market today.

But this stupid mandate does have real-world consequences. Just last month, a Colorado mother and her family were removed from their flight because the plane's captain didn't believe that her 3-year-old son with autism would keep his mask on. This mother, unfortunately, was not the first to be

removed from a flight, and I am sure she won't be the last if this absurd mandate remains in place.

This policy discourages family travel after a year of separation and forces Americans with children, especially children with disabilities, to cancel travel or else live in constant fear that an untimely tantrum or a bad day could ruin their trip and cost them more than \$1,000 in fines.

As the father of two young boys, I can only assume the morons who cooked up this rule don't have children, or perhaps they outsource their kids to nannies and au pairs during flights, just as they do during their dinner parties and fancy retreats. Young kids, especially when they are in a new location surrounded by strangers, tend to act out and misbehave, as any parent will tell you. That entirely predictable behavior shouldn't result in their whole family being kicked off planes, trains, and buses far from home or their destination.

I must also observe—although I know that facts have nothing to do with this mandate—that young kids are also the least likely to get the coronavirus and the least likely to spread it.

Now, I concede that it is not only young kids who sometimes cause problems on planes. There are too many instances of grownups refusing to wear masks or berating flight attendants merely trying to do their job. These unruly adults should know better, of course, but so should the politicians and the bureaucrats who imposed this idiotic mandate in the first place.

Millions of Americans are flying again, and to say simply that “they should follow my rules” is impractical and ignores all we know about human nature.

The mandate, therefore, hurts not only passengers but also flight attendants. In our line of work, we probably fly more than most Americans these days. Over the last couple of months, I have personally seen so many flight attendants set up for failure by the Biden administration. They usually don't want to boss around their passengers or kick them off an airplane and cause a scene that will go viral on social media, but they are also told they have to enforce this stupid mask mandate, and it is all for no good reason.

It would be one thing if there was scientific evidence that suggested that these masks in airports and on airplanes or buses or trains actually slowed the spread of the virus among the unvaccinated, but that is not the case. Even the Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg, can't defend these mandates on the merits. He doesn't even try. The only rationale he could give when recently asked about the mandate was, “They're a matter of respect,” to which I would respond, how about some respect for Americans and their common sense?

If you can't defend a policy on the merits, you shouldn't have the policy,

and the Biden administration should therefore immediately rescind its mask mandates for airports and airplanes and buses and trains. Vaccinated Americans and their young kids should not be forced to wear face coverings on airplanes or anywhere else, for that matter. It is unnecessary, it is unscientific, and in the case of children, it is cruel.

I think I speak for millions of Americans when I say: Mask mandates have long since outlived their usefulness and their welcome. We have all but won the war against the Wuhan coronavirus. It is time for us to act like it, to reclaim victory and reclaim our freedom.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Mr. BROWN. Object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I again ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BROWN. Object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill clerk continued with the call of the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### VOTE ON JACKSON-AKIWUMI NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Jackson-Akiwumi nomination?

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) would have voted “nay.”

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 40, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 252 Ex.)

## YEAS—53

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Brown	Kelly	Schatz
Cantwell	King	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Leahy	Sinema
Casey	Lujan	Smith
Collins	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murkowski	Warnock
Feinstein	Murphy	Warren
Gillibrand	Murray	Whitehouse
Graham	Ossoff	Wyden
Hassan	Padilla	

## NAYS—40

Barrasso	Grassley	Rounds
Blackburn	Hagerty	Rubio
Blunt	Hawley	Sasse
Boozman	Hoeven	Scott (FL)
Braun	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Capito	Kennedy	Shelby
Cassidy	Lankford	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lee	Thune
Cotton	Lummis	Tillis
Crapo	McConnell	Toomey
Cruz	Paul	Wicker
Daines	Portman	Young
Ernst	Risch	
Fischer	Romney	

## NOT VOTING—7

Burr	Johnson	Tuberville
Cramer	Marshall	
Hyde-Smith	Moran	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Michigan.

## FOURTH OF JULY

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about how far our Nation has come in the past 6 months.

Just for a moment, think back to where we were in January. Every day, hundreds of thousands of Americans were being diagnosed with COVID-19, and on many days, more than 3,000—or even 4,000—of our moms and dads and brothers and sisters and children and friends and neighbors were dying of this horrible disease. Meanwhile, millions of Americans were out of work just 6 months ago, and small businesses were unsure whether or not they could reopen safely. During these cold, dark days, it was easy to wonder if things would ever get better.

But something else happened in January. On January 20, President Joe Biden and Vice President KAMALA HARRIS were sworn into office, and with their inauguration came a laser focus on defeating this horrific disease and getting our country moving again.

They had some amazing tools in their arsenals: vaccines that proved to be more effective than anyone could have hoped—thank goodness. And I am so proud that Michigan workers at Pfizer have played a big role in producing these lifesaving vaccines and getting them shipped all over the country.

When President Biden and Vice President HARRIS took office, only 5 percent of American adults had re-

ceived at least one shot. Now, only 6 months later, 70 percent of Americans over age 30 have received at least one shot. That is a total of 300 million vaccine shots in only 150 days, and we are seeing the results.

This week, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer was able to drop our State's pandemic restrictions. That is great news for our small businesses and our restaurants and our entertainment venues, just in time for peak travel season in beautiful Michigan.

Nationwide, more than 2 million jobs have been created since President Biden took office—2 million jobs since he took office just 6 months ago. Half as many people are applying for unemployment each month as were in January. And, next month, families will begin to receive advance child tax credits that are going to lift half of the poor children in our country out of poverty—incredible. These monthly payments of \$250 or \$300 per child will help families pay for the things they need to care for their children, and it will also boost the economy.

We have made amazing progress, and it wouldn't have been possible without leadership from the White House, around \$20 billion in funding for vaccines from Congress, the dedication of our medical professionals, the hard work of our small businesses that have done so much to keep their employees and their customers safe, and the willingness of so many Americans to literally roll up their sleeves to protect themselves and each other.

It is true that we have a lot more to do, of course. Many families and communities are still struggling to get back on their feet. We need to continue to support our small businesses that have been through so much.

We know that some States and regions are lagging behind on vaccinations for a number of reasons. That is so unfortunate because we know that these vaccinations are safe, they are free to receive, and they are amazingly effective. The numbers prove it.

On January 23, 3,322 Americans died of coronavirus in a single day, and, yesterday, 370 people died of coronavirus in the United States. Of course, that is still 370 too many lives lost. Each one of those lives was precious, and our hearts are with everyone who is grieving.

There is still a risk that variants will spread and cases could rise again, especially in areas with low vaccination rates, which is why it is so critical that people get vaccinated. It is so important to get vaccinated, not only for yourselves but for your friends, for your neighbors, and for your children.

We have come a long way—a really long way—in the last 6 months. It is really amazing, and it is just in time for the Fourth of July. Americans have a lot to celebrate this Independence Day. It is a day when we give thanks for our Nation and for the freedoms we enjoy as Americans, and this year we have a few extra freedoms to celebrate:

the freedom to get together with friends again, the freedom to eat dinner at a favorite local restaurant, the freedom to attend a live music event or go to a movie, the freedom to live our lives with a lot less fear—a lot less fear—and the freedom to give our loved ones a hug. And I know I am cherishing every hug I can give my 95-year-old mom.

All of these freedoms are thanks to science and an administration that believes in science, and the willingness of Americans to trust the science.

To my fellow Americans, thank you for that.

Thank you to our President, and happy Fourth of July.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The majority leader is recognized.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 67.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Uzra Zeya, of Virginia, to be an Under Secretary of State (Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights).

## CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

## CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 67, Uzra Zeya, of Virginia, to be an Under Secretary of State (Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights).

Charles E. Schumer, Jon Ossoff, Margaret Wood Hassan, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Ron Wyden, Robert Menendez, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jacky Rosen, Cory A. Booker, Tammy Duckworth, John Hickenlooper, Jon Tester, Edward J. Markey, Tammy Baldwin, Brian Schatz, Gary C. Peters, Tina Smith.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.